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Fostering meaningful work in organizations: A multi-level review and integration

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ABSTRACT

With more individuals wanting their work to be meaningful, rather than just a source of income, more organizations recognize that fostering meaningful work is crucial for engaging their employees. Although scholars from diverse disciplines have made valuable efforts to examine how individual, job, organizational, and societal factors contribute to meaningful work, there is still no cohesive understanding of how these factors relate to one another and, thus, how organizations can proactively foster experiences of meaningful work for their employees. This paper reports the results of a multilevel review on the factors that contribute to workers' experiences of meaningful work and discusses how these factors are related to each other to enable the experience of meaningful work in ways that organizations can promote. Our review suggests that to enable individuals to move beyond satisfying their basic needs by constructing their own sense of meaningful work, organizations should build and maintain work environments characterized by a) well-designed, good-fitting, and quality jobs that provide opportunities to job craft, b) facilitative leaders, cultures, policies and practices, and high-quality relationships, and c) an access to decent work. Our review demonstrates that there is a need for scholars to develop a theory that explains how individual, organizational and societal factors interact to foster meaningful work in organizations. Future research should also explore how organizations can target personality and societal factors that contribute to meaningful work.

Contemporary discourse on work and careers increasingly emphasizes the importance of experiencing one's work as meaningful (e.g., Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Steger & Dik, 2010). Broadly defined as work that is personally significant and worthwhile (e.g., Pratt & Ashforth, 2003), meaningful work positively correlates with many important individual work and career outcomes, such as work engagement (e.g., May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), job satisfaction (e.g., Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012), and career development (e.g., Duffy & Dik, 2013). This explains why organizations have started to recognize that cultivating meaningful work is an important means to engage and retain their employees (Deloitte, 2017). Scholars argue that organizations not only have the capacity to foster meaningful work by implementing diverse practices to create meaningful workplaces (e.g., Chalofsky, 2010; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Pratt, Pradies, & Lepisto, 2013), but also that they have an ethical obligation to establish the basic moral conditions that allow such workplaces to flourish (Michaelson, Pratt, Grant, & Dunn, 2014). Although this highlights the importance of understanding how organizations can boost meaningful work among their employees to facilitate positive work and

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career-related outcomes, few reviews have specifically addressed this issue (for exceptions, see Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz, & Soane, 2017; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Pratt et al., 2013).

Despite efforts to integrate the literature on meaningful work (e.g., Rosso et al., 2010), the literature remains highly fragmented (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Rosso et al., 2010). With few exceptions (e.g., Schnell, Höge, & Pollet, 2013), studies tend to focus on only a few variables from either individual or organizational perspectives without bringing in important societal variables. Likewise, reviews typically have included individual, job, and organizational factors, and rarely societal factors, yet they have not integrated these into a cohesive framework that explains how these factors relate to one another to create meaningful work. This leaves organizations in a difficult place: without an integrated synthesis of the research base, translating research into practice is challenging. For example, focusing on single-variable explanations without attention to the entire complex system may have unintended consequences and be ultimately ineffective. Therefore, the integration of different streams of research through a multilevel literature review is of utmost importance to understand the factors that shape meaningful work and – most importantly given limited scholarship – how organizations can boost meaningful work among their employees to facilitate positive work, career, and well-being outcomes.

This paper describes how organizations can proactively facilitate experiences of meaningful work. First, we provide an a) updated multilevel review on the factors that contribute to workers' experiences of meaningful work, followed by a b) discussion of how these factors may relate and interact to enable the experience of meaningful work in ways that can be promoted by organizations. Through these means, we extend prior literature reviews on meaningful work (Bailey, Yeoman, Madden, Thompson, & Kerridge, 2016; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Rosso et al., 2010; Steger & Dik, 2010). Second, by exploring ways organizations can boost meaningful work, this paper adds to the limited scholarship on the topic (e.g., Bailey et al., 2017; Pratt et al., 2013; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003) by arguing that organizations need to account for individual differences nested within job-related, organizational, and societal contexts in their attempts to foster individuals' meaning creation. In this way, they can focus on “enabling opportunities for meaningfulness creation”, rather than simply engage in “meaning management”, which might result in the erosion of meaningful work (Bailey et al., 2017; Bailey & Madden, 2016; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Therefore, in our review and literature integration, we build on the foundation of individuals' experience of meaningful work arising from the influence of different-level factors (person, job, organization, and society).

1. Meaningful work and related concepts

For the majority of working individuals, meaningfulness is the most significant and valuable feature of work (Cascio, 2003). But what does meaningful work mean? A key distinction is between “meaning” and “meaningfulness” (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). “Meanings” are people's perceptions or interpretations of elements in their environment. Therefore, “meanings” are closely related to meaning-making – a cognitive process whereby people make sense of their experiences (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003) – and can have positive, negative, or neutral valence (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). In contrast, “meaningfulness” or “meaningful work” refers to “work experienced as particularly significant and holding more positive meaning for individuals” (Rosso et al., 2010, p. 95). Thus, meaningful work is personally significant and has positive valence. Pratt and Ashforth (2003) further distinguish between meaningfulness *in* work, which arises from what one does (i.e., one's work role), and *at* work, which arises from being a part of something bigger (i.e., one's membership in a community or culture). Building on these dominant perspectives, Steger et al. (2012) suggested that next to the subjective experience of work as purposeful and significant (e.g., Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010), meaningful work is also eudaimonic (growth- and purpose-oriented) rather than hedonic (pleasure-oriented). Each of these approaches highlight somewhat different nuances, so to be inclusive in our review, we refer to meaningful work broadly as *work that that is personally significant and worthwhile*.

Meaningful work reflects the personal significance of one of the most salient social activities, one of the largest uses of adults' waking time, and one of the primary contexts in which people pursue their aspirations in life. Therefore, the nomological net for meaningful work ought to include sociocultural factors, organizational factors, job-related factors and individual psychological factors, particularly those related to well-being.

Meaningful work positively relates to, but is distinct from, other concepts such as meaning in life, work engagement, intrinsic motivation, and calling (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). In particular, meaning in life concerns a global or holistic perspective on what makes our lives matter, rather than only what makes our work worthwhile (Martela & Steger, 2016). Intrinsic motivation refers to doing an activity based on its inherent interest and enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 2000) but does not emphasize the significance and meaningfulness of this activity. Calling represents perhaps the most closely related concept to meaningful work, because it refers to work that one feels compelled to do that is meaningful, that serves a higher, prosocially-oriented purpose, and that is inspired by some transcendent source (e.g., Dik & Duffy, 2009). Research has demonstrated calling and meaningful work to be distinct constructs, and longitudinal evidence suggests that meaningful work is a predictor of living one's calling (e.g., Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Douglas, 2014). Although calling shares substantial conceptual overlap with meaningful work, including the desire to serve some greater good (Steger et al., 2012), its most distinctive element (see Brown & Lent, 2016) is its notion of a “transcendent summons” (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Some calling research uses methods or measures that do not include this most distinctive element of calling, however; these operationalizations of “calling” are essentially indistinguishable from meaningful work. Therefore, where calling is investigated without imposing a definition (e.g., in qualitative studies) or operationalized as work that is personally significant and worthwhile, that serves some greater good, or that reflects purpose and passion without the inclusion of a transcendent summons, we include it in our review.

2. Theoretical models of meaningful work

Scholars from diverse disciplines (e.g., management, organizational behavior, vocational psychology) have made theoretical contributions to understand factors that facilitate the experience of meaningful work. For example, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) identified four sources of meaningful work – a) developing and becoming self, b) unity with others, c) serving others, and d) expressing the self – as well as from understanding and addressing the tensions between these dimensions. The authors suggest that the experiences of meaningful work involve tensions between the need to meet the needs of *the self* and the need to meet the needs *of others*; and the need for *being* as well as the need for *doing* (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). In turn, Rosso et al. (2010) suggested that meaningful work can be explained using two psychological dimensions that differ based on the direction of action (i.e., toward self or others) and one's underlying motives (i.e., agency or communion). In their model, the self/other dimension reflects the target toward which the effort to create meaningfulness is directed, whether that be internal to the self, or external. The agency/communion dimension, in contrast, refers to one's motives, differentiating between agency motives (e.g., seeking to create, assert, or divide elements, as one would do when playing a musical instrument) and communion motives (e.g. seeking to connect or unite elements, as in the case of evaluating one's life goals or rekindling past relationships). A third model, proposed by Steger and Dik (2010), argued that meaning arises when people are able to make sense of their experience (e.g., who they are, their place in the world), develop a sense of purpose (i.e., identify and pursue highly valued, overarching goals), and directly or indirectly serve the greater good.

Most of these theoretical models of meaningful work have focused on the individual experience of meaningful work (e.g., Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). These involve individual efforts to express the self or to serve the greater good. While valuable, these models do not fully incorporate societal and organizational factors that affect the individual-in-work. Other models that have incorporated organizational factors (e.g., Bailey et al., 2017) have not included social, economic, and cultural factors that individuals and organizations exist within. Although other theories have effectively addressed socioeconomic or cultural issues (e.g., Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016), these theories have not fully addressed the individual factors that influence the experience of meaningful work. What is missing is an integrative theoretical framework that places individuals fully within their job, organizational, and social contexts and explains how these levels are related to produce meaningful work. Without such a holistic and multilevel model we lack a comprehensive understanding of how meaningfulness is found by different individuals working in different jobs, organizational, and societal contexts. While there are different job-, organizational-, and societal-level sources that individuals independently can draw on to find work meaningfulness, it is the fit between person and environment that ensures the smooth path toward meaningful work (Hansen, 2013; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Therefore, it is important to explore the joined influences of person and environmental sources on the experiences of work meaningfulness (Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2013) and understand how they relate to each other in a dynamic system. Integrating different factors fostering meaningful work is also likely to be of value from an applied view. Knowing how person and environment factors interact to foster greater meaningful work, organizations can better customize their organizational policies and practices as well as the design of their jobs.

3. Method

To find relevant articles for our review, we conducted an extensive search of the literature across multiple databases from a variety of fields (e.g., PsycINFO, Social Sciences Citations Index, Business Source Complete, etc.), although we focused on reviewing journal articles and academic book chapters representing management, organizational behavior, and vocational psychology disciplines. We also included articles from our knowledge of the literature and through ancestral searches (i.e., examining the references of included articles). We included both conceptual and empirical articles, which we were careful to distinguish in our search, and included a variety of search terms (e.g., “work meaning”, “meaningful work”, “work meaningfulness”, “meaningfulness in work”, “meaningfulness at work”, etc.).

To limit our search, we reviewed literature spanning from 1998 to 2017 (including articles that appeared online in 2017), thus encompassing 20 years; recent meta-analyses indicate that the vast majority of empirical studies on meaningful work have occurred after 1998 (Allan, Batz, Sterling, & Tay, under review). In the sections that follow, we first review factors related to meaningful work at each level of analysis (individual-, job-, organizational-, and societal-level). Then, we discuss the limitations identified in the review and describe how different-level factors relate and interact with each other. By developing an integrative model of factors fostering meaningful work, the current review is distinct from the others (Bailey et al., 2016; Dik, Steger, Fitch-Martin, & Onder, 2013; Rosso et al., 2010; Steger & Dik, 2010).

4. Overview of the reviewed literature

Table 1 provides a summary of our review of the conceptual and empirical work on the antecedents of meaningful work at different levels.

4.1. Individual-level factors

At the most basic level, we contend that the search for meaning is a universal instinct (Frankl, 1969) that extends to diverse life domains, including work. We also assume (with McAdams & Pals, 2006) that individual differences reflect variations in otherwise species-typical universals shaped by our collective evolutionary history. Thus, while arguably all people are inclined toward meaning-

Table 1
Overview of factors fostering meaningful work at multiple levels.

Multiple levels	Factors	Review findings
Individual level	Dispositional signatures	- Extroversion and conscientiousness (+) - Neuroticism (−) - Positive affective disposition (+) - Job performance (+) - Signature strengths (+)
	Characteristic adaptations	- Intrinsic motivation (+) - Work volition (+) - Service and greater good motivation (+)
	Personal narratives	- Shared experiences (+) - Work that fosters autonomy (+) - Work that syncs with one's identity (+)
Job level	Type, quality, and amount of work	- Working in safe and fair conditions (+) - Underemployment (−) - Working in “white-collar” jobs (+) - Limited developmental opportunities and resources in job (−)
	Job design	- Job characteristics (e.g., autonomy, task significance) (+) - Job crafting (+)
Organizational level	Leadership	- Transformational leadership (+) - Ethical leadership (+) - Empowering leadership (+) - Communicating organizational mission (+) - Leaders as architects of meaning (+)
	Organizational culture	- Innovative and supportive cultures (+) - Integrating elements of ethical culture (+) - Hierarchical culture (−)
	Organizational policies and practices	- Corporate social responsibility (CSR) (+) - (Corporate) volunteering (+) - HR practices focused on engagement and development (recruitment, selection, socialization, skill and career development) (+)
	Social context at work	- Good workplace relationships (+) - Social-moral climate (+)
Societal level	Access to decent work	- Safe working conditions (+) - Access to healthcare (+) - Adequate compensation (+) - Hours that allow for free time and rest (+) - Match of organizational, cultural, and family values (+)
	Cultural norms	- Emphasis on individual fulfillment and wellbeing (+) - Emphasis on work as a pathway to individual fulfillment and wellbeing (+)

seeking, variability in the experience and expression of meaningful work reflects individual-level factors that function within the person who is embedded in a particular job, organization, and sociocultural context. These factors include a) *dispositional signatures* such as interests, abilities or personality traits, b) *characteristic adaptations*, consisting of personal concerns such as motives, goals, and strivings; and c) *personal narratives* (McAdams & Pals, 2006).

4.1.1. Dispositional signatures

Dispositional signatures reflect patterns of traits that are highly stable across situations and over time. Some studies have examined the relation between the Big Five personality traits and meaningful work, revealing that meaningful work has weak-to-moderate positive correlations with conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion, and a weak negative correlation with neuroticism (e.g., Frieder, Wang, & Oh, 2018; Woods & Sofat, 2013). Other studies have examined single personality traits. One such study (Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Miller, Menger, & Rothmann, 2013), using a sample of Israeli white-collar employees, found small-to-moderate positive relations between meaningful work and positive affective disposition (i.e., predisposition to experience a given affective state across situations and over time). Another study, this one of soldiers, found that the personality trait hardiness was related to the tendency to find work during deployment meaningful (Britt, Adler, & Bartone, 2001). Schnell et al. (2013) incorporated a proxy rating of interest types for the purpose of quantifying work-role fit and found that this measure of fit was positively associated

with meaningful work. With regard to values as a source of meaningful work, Rosso et al.'s (2010) comprehensive review found positive correlations of meaningful work with benevolence (e.g., Gandal, Roccas, Sagiv, & Wrzesniewski, 2005) and self-actualization values (Šverko & Vizek-Vidovic, 1995). In short, some people seem to be more predisposed than others to experiencing meaningful work.

Meaningful work is also linked to abilities and strengths. Meaningful work often includes an understanding of people's abilities in light of the expectations placed on them and how both connect to a broader purpose (Steger, 2017; Steger & Dik, 2009). Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011) found scores on their measure of calling, which assesses "a consuming, meaningful passion toward a domain" (p. 1005), to correlate significantly but weakly with an objective measure of ability for a sample of elite music students. Similarly, one study found the experience of meaningful work to correlate weakly with self-rated job performance (a rough proxy for ability) among a sample of South African teachers (Fouché, Rothmann, & Vyver, 2017). Stronger results are found when other self-reported proxies for ability are examined in relation to calling as a form of meaningful work (e.g., Dobrow, 2013). One example of perceived abilities may be signature strengths. Strengths and the deployment of those strengths were found to be both positively associated with meaningful work among Israeli participants (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010), and Harzer and Ruch (2012) found that applying signature strengths at work was positively associated with positive experiences at work, a construct that included meaningfulness, and calling as a form of meaningful work.

4.1.2. Characteristic adaptations

Characteristic adaptations reflect individuals' motives, goals, and strivings. In general, people who work orient to particular goals, which are hierarchically organized such that higher-level goals (whether they are consciously articulated or not) inform the purpose of behavior, and lower-level goals inform the specific action plans that direct behavior in ways intended to achieve the higher goals (Barrick et al., 2013). In their recent conceptual work, Barrick et al. (2013) proposed that four implicit goals prompted by personality traits—striving for competence, autonomy, status/power, or relatedness—"comprehensively capture individual differences in intrinsic motivation that determine purposefulness and meaningfulness at work" (p. 135). They also proposed that pursuing such broad goals help enact people's constellation of traits, and that because the underlying traits are highly stable, so are the goals on which individuals focus. Then, "when the behaviors, emotions, and thoughts linked to these goals are enacted in a context that reinforces the perception that one's actions are purposeful, this in turn evokes the psychological state of experienced meaningfulness" (p. 138). Therefore, meaningfulness arises when people can enact their personalities, goals, and motivations in the right contexts.

Although Barrick et al.'s (2013) theory awaits thorough testing, research has begun to examine how particular types of motivation are linked to meaningful work. For example, Allan, Autin, and Duffy (2016) found that intrinsic work motivation and work volition (i.e., beliefs in one's ability to make career choices) were both positively associated with meaningful work. Similarly, Blattner and Franklin (2017) found a positive correlation between work volition and meaningful work. Allan, Autin, and Duffy (2014) found that serving others or contributing to the greater good was the central driver in people's sense of their work as meaningful. Consistent with this latter finding, a recent set of experiments demonstrated that helping others increases meaningful work (Allan, Duffy, & Collisson, 2017).

Rosso et al. (2010) also suggested that "systematic examinations of the mechanisms through which spiritual life impacts the meaning of work" (p. 107) would offer a valuable contribution to the literature. Although not formally tested in the work domain, Park's (2012) meaning-making model suggests that a person's global meaning system—a worldview consisting of beliefs, goals, values, and sense of global meaning—translates into daily meaning in the work role through interpretations, strivings and projects, and life satisfaction and positive affect. The model postulates that meaningful work varies as a function of how well one's components of global meaning align with one's work experiences.

4.1.3. Personal narratives

Personal narratives refer to individuals' idiosyncratic, internal, dynamic life stories, constructed by people to achieve coherence from what often seem like disparate experiences. In short, personal narratives offer a way for people to make sense of their lives; when applied to their careers, they offer a way to make sense of and derive meaning from their work. Some studies have investigated the ways that people use narratives to extract meaning from work using qualitative, interview-based methods. For example, Bailey and Madden (2017) interviewed workers within three occupations (refuse collectors, stone masons, and academics) and found that meaningful work occurred on an episodic rather than continual basis, and was tied to experiences that were shared, that fostered autonomy, and that were temporally complex. Several qualitative studies on a sense of calling as a form of meaningful work also have emerged to demonstrate how discerning or interpreting a calling is often a highly individualized and complex process that is deeply integrated into participants' sense of identity (e.g., Schabram & Maitlis, 2017).

Overall, the results of the reviewed studies demonstrate that although some trait-level individual differences are relevant, the individual factors most associated with experiences of work as meaningful are goal directedness, prosocial motivation, and a deeper understanding of one's career narrative. Since not all employees are self-directed in their goal development or prosocially-motivated, organizations play an important role in creating opportunities for finding meaningfulness in one's work, especially for those employees who might find it hard to do it on their own. Moreover, workers who have factors that predispose them to develop a sense of meaningfulness at work may still need the appropriate context to experience meaningfulness (Barrick et al., 2013). Several articles are available that describe intervention strategies that career counselors can implement to foster a deeper sense of meaningful work among employees; some of these strategies could potentially be self-driven as well (e.g., Dik et al., 2015).

4.2. Job-level factors

Job-level factors concern the responsibilities and tasks that characterize one's job. People may differ in terms of how they perceive the importance and appeal of any number of job characteristics, just as they may differ in terms of how they decide to do their jobs. Although research is just beginning, several studies already provide grounding for the influence of the *type*, *quality*, *and amount of work* on meaningful work as well as *job design*, which includes how jobs have been designed or modified by organizations or workers to enable work meaningfulness.

4.2.1. Type, quality, and amount of work

Unsurprisingly, several models suggest that the experience of meaningful work may vary due to characteristics of work itself (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1976). At a very basic level, people may be more likely to find meaningful work in situations in which they have basic work needs met and feel appreciated for their contributions. Research supports these notions by demonstrating positive correlations between meaningful work and working in safe conditions, with access to healthcare, adequate financial compensation, and down time (Duffy et al., 2017). Conversely, meaningful work is negatively correlated with perceived underemployment across several domains, including perceptions of insufficient pay or status, or a mismatch between the job requirements and a worker's field of expertise or qualifications (Allan, Tay, & Sterling, 2017).

As part of wider efforts to understand how job type may affect meaningful work, some researchers have sought to identify differences across professions. In a study based in India, the highest levels of meaningful work were reported for those employed in the Insurance sector, followed by those in Teaching, Information Technology, general Business, and Dentistry (Malhotra, Bhola, Khandelwal, & Bhola, 2016). Another study, based in New Zealand, reported that those employed in jobs that are considered to be "white collar" reported higher levels of meaningful work than those employed in traditional "blue collar" jobs, or those employed in so-called "pink collar" jobs (Lips-Wiersma, Wright, & Dik, 2016). Research also shows that individuals experience less meaningful work when they lack personal or career development opportunities in their jobs (Arnoux-Nicolas, Sovet, Lhotellier, Di Fabio, & Bernaud, 2016; Rautenbach & Rothmann, 2017) and when they lack the resources necessary for doing the job (Arnoux-Nicolas et al., 2016).

These job-level factors may be viewed as conveying messages about the worth and capabilities of an individual. As our review shows, workers who feel pressured to work in unsafe conditions and granted insufficient pay or status could reasonably perceive a message that they are of little value or worth. Thus, to provide opportunities for individuals to create meaningfulness in their work, organizations should ensure these individuals work in jobs that fit the level of their qualification and enable development opportunities.

4.2.2. Job design

The job characteristics model argues for the importance of higher levels of autonomy, skill variety, task identity, and task significance for the individual experiences of work meaningfulness (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Rosso et al., 2010). Both conceptual and empirical scholarship points to the fact that having jobs designed to promote a sense of purpose and positive impact on others relates to greater experiences of task significance and meaningful work (e.g., Grant, 2007, 2008; Grant et al., 2007). Also, Allan (2017) found that task significance significantly predicted work meaningfulness over time and not vice versa.

Not all workers have perfect working circumstances when they start a new job. Ideally, however, workers feel a sense of self-determination in shaping the boundaries of their jobs, so that they can engage in proactive redefining and reimagining their jobs to align with their preferences, needs, and passions, contributing to their experiences of meaningful work (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For example, individuals engage in job crafting by establishing more positive relationships with others or even changing their mindset to identify how their work creates benefit for others (Grant, 2007), resulting in a stronger sense of meaningfulness. Research has shown that by proactively crafting their job demands and job resources, employees experience greater work meaningfulness both directly (Petrou, Bakker, & Van den Heuvel, 2017) and indirectly through the optimization of their person-job fit (Tims, Derks, & Bakker, 2016).

To summarize, working in jobs that fit one's qualifications, provide opportunities for development, are autonomous, are significant, and provide the means to design one's working conditions for the better are all important for individuals to find meaningful work. Organizations may contribute to employees' experiences of meaningful work by attempting to design jobs that respect individuals' needs and qualifications and that empower individuals to craft or re-design jobs in ways that optimize their sense of prosocial impact.

4.3. Organizational-level factors

Next to individual- and job-related factors, meaningfulness could arise from individuals' efforts to make sense of organizational-level influences, namely: *leadership*, *organizational culture*, *organizational policies and practices*, and the *social context at work*. While we further discuss how each of these factors on its own contributes to work meaningfulness, we acknowledge that these factors are related to each other as they together form explain how organizations as a whole enable meaningful work for their employees.

4.3.1. Leadership

Conceptual work suggests that workers experience meaningfulness when they have a deep understanding of themselves and their values, the organization and its ultimate aspirations, and their person-organization fit (Chalofsky, 2003; Steger & Dik, 2010). Central

in this process is developing an understanding of how one's daily work connects with important personal values that align with the organization's mission. This is especially true given that workers engage in specialized tasks and goals that might be far removed from greater purposes of their workplaces (Carton, 2017; Steger & Dik, 2010). Therefore, leaders play an important role in facilitating this understanding in several ways.

One way leaders can contribute to their followers' sense of work meaningfulness is through helping them connect their daily tasks to the ultimate aspirations of the company. Indeed, research shows that helping workers understand how their daily tasks connect with these ultimate purposes may increase their sense of meaningfulness (Allan, 2017; Harris, Kacmar, & Zivnuska, 2007).

Sosik's (2000) conceptual model of personal meaning and charismatic leadership suggests that managers' personal meaning and purpose in life cause leadership behaviors that construct meaning for followers. Therefore, at a minimum, leaders need to cultivate their own sense of meaningfulness and articulate this clearly (Steger & Dik, 2010). Leaders who find their own meaningfulness and can articulate a cohesive and cogent rationale for how their organization contributes to the greater good are better able to transmit this to employees. Doing so also limits a potential risk that employees may view disingenuous efforts to "increase meaningfulness" as attempts at control and manipulation (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). As Bailey et al. (2017) suggested, meaningful work may only relate to positive outcomes for those with relative autonomy in the workplace.

Furthermore, several lines of research suggest that certain styles of leadership can increase the meaningfulness of work among employees, which could in turn increase positive workplace outcomes, such as engagement, organizational identification, and voice behaviors (Chen, Wang, & Lee, 2018; Demirtas, Hannah, Gok, Arslan, & Capar, 2017). Some leadership styles positively linked to meaningful work include transformational leadership (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007; Purvanova, Bono, & Dzieweczynski, 2006; Tummers & Knies, 2013), empowering leadership (Lee, Idris, & Delfabbro, 2017), and ethical leadership (Demirtas et al., 2017; Wang & Xu, 2017). For example, transformational leaders create a vision of the future and inspire employees to work toward that meaningful purpose as they are able to connect workers with the ultimate aspiration of the organization (Bass, 1990).

In another form of leadership, Carton (2017) argued that leaders should act as "architects" who create meaning in their organizations with four sense-giving actions: reducing the number of ultimate aspirations to one, shifting attention from this ultimate aspiration to a concrete purpose, communicating milestones to achieving this purpose, and delineating the connection between the ultimate aspiration and the concrete purpose. Carton (2017) explained that employees' work meaning might have changed through the process of John F. Kennedy coaxing NASA's ultimate aspirations and that this meaning was a precursor to employees' meaningful work, which points to the value of leaders acting as "architects".

However, these leadership styles may be limited in their ability to facilitate meaningfulness. In their interviews of 135 workers on the meaningfulness of their work, Bailey and Madden (2016) found little reference to organizational leaders creating meaningfulness for their employees, and when participants did mention leaders, it was typically to discuss how bad bosses decreased their sense of work meaningfulness. In addition, visions set forward by transformational leaders may be too distant and vague for employees to understand (Carton, 2017), and they do not always correspond with a greater purpose relevant to the personal values of employees. For example, creating "a nationwide chain of women's sportswear stores" (Bass, 1990, p. 23) qualifies as a vision, but it hardly meets criteria for an ultimate aspiration likely to help employees experience a deep sense of work meaningfulness.

Therefore, good management may turn out to be necessary but not sufficient for employees' experiences of meaningful work. In other words, leaders may have to focus on what not to do, rather than what to do, and several actions may decrease meaningfulness in employees (Bailey & Madden, 2016). First, evidence suggests that an abusive workplace that overburdens or overworks its employees makes it unlikely that meaningfulness will develop (Duffy et al., 2016). Second, failing to acknowledge the important contributions of their followers may harm workers' ability to maintain meaningfulness (Montani, Boudrias, & Pigeon, 2017). Finally, giving workers pointless busy work when there is not meaningful work available is another way to stymie meaningfulness (Bailey & Madden, 2016). Instead, providing employees with autonomy and free time to develop projects and express their creativity might have the opposite effect (Bailey & Madden, 2016).

Thus, strong organizational leadership is likely an effective driver to increase employees' meaningful work. This leadership needs to be authentic and mission driven.

4.3.2. Organizational culture

Research suggests that organizational culture, which is a shared pattern of assumptions, meanings, and values about how things are done every day in the organization (Schein, 2010), influences employees' experiences meaningfulness at work (Pratt et al., 2013; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). In their book chapter, Cardador and Rupp (2011) draw on the multiple needs model of organizational justice (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001) to propose that employees in *innovative* (i.e., characterized by entrepreneurialism, personal initiative and growth) and *supportive* (i.e., characterized by employee empowerment and humane work environment) cultures will be more likely to perceive their work as meaningful than in other cultures because innovative and supportive cultures allow employees to satisfy needs for control, belongingness, and meaningful existence. Cardador and Rupp (2011) also proposed that a stronger and a more positive relation between organizational culture and work meaningfulness could be in place when a) the aspects of the organization's culture are aligned and emphasized similarly in unique parts of the organization, b) the elements of innovative and supportive cultures are integrated, and c) when the elements of ethical culture (i.e., characterized by the focus on values and integrity) are imbued in the organizational culture.

Empirical research linking organizational culture and meaningful work shows that a bureaucratic culture (i.e., characterized by highly formalized rules and regulations) decreases employees' meaningful work (Lee et al., 2017) and that there is a positive relation between organizational learning culture (i.e., focused on enabling collective learning) and workplace spirituality, a concept including

meaningful work (Sorakraikitikul & Siengthai, 2014).

The somewhat limited literature points to the need for organizations to recognize that innovative and supportive organizational cultures with the elements of ethical culture enable the satisfaction of employees' needs for control, belongingness, and meaningful existence and therefore are more likely to boost work meaningfulness than other cultures. In other words, good organizational cultures allow people to engage in their own individual-level processes that cultivate work meaningfulness. However, drawing on the suggestions by Cardador and Rupp (2011), organizations could attempt to enrich their current cultures with the elements of innovative, supportive and ethical cultures to create more opportunities for employees to experience meaningfulness at work. In so doing, organizations need to pay attention to the consistency of cultural elements to successfully integrate the different elements in organization's culture, because without this coherence employees' work meaningfulness could be undermined rather than enhanced (Cardador & Rupp, 2011).

4.3.3. Organizational policies and practices

Among all the organizational policies and practices, policies and actions that consider the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environment performance, referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), are often seen as having the potential to enable greater employees' experiences of work meaningfulness (e.g., Aguinis & Glavas, 2013; Aguinis & Glavas, 2017; Michaelson et al., 2014; Pratt et al., 2013). Both conceptual and empirical work on the topic argues that CSR contributes to meaningful work because a) it signals that organizations have an ethical approach toward its various stakeholders, making employees feel a sense of pride of and identification with the organization (e.g., Glavas & Kelley, 2014) and b) it satisfies individuals' need for a meaningful existence, giving employees a sense that they are part of an effort to help improve the well-being of others (e.g., Bauman & Skitka, 2012; Cropanzano et al., 2001). Indeed, prior research found that CSR is positively associated with meaningful work (Akdoğan, Arslan, & Demirtaş, 2016; Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Raub & Blunschi, 2014).

Aguinis and Glavas (2013, 2017) propose that in organizations where CSR is embedded (i.e., integrated within an organization's strategy, routines, and operations), employees are more likely to experience both meaningfulness *at* work and *in* work. In turn, when the CSR is not embedded (i.e., peripheral), employees might perceive a lack of congruence between the CSR image an organization projects and what an employee really does (i.e., CSR as a greenwashing) that negatively influences employees' experience of work meaningfulness (Aguinis & Glavas, 2013).

Research on corporate volunteering shows that when organizations provide opportunities for their employees to engage in corporate volunteering and support them in this endeavor, the employees also experience greater work meaningfulness (e.g., Caligiuri, Mencin, & Jiang, 2013; Rodell, 2013). Indeed, research suggests that employees engage in volunteering opportunities to compensate for the lack of meaningfulness in their job (Geroy, Wright, & Jacoby, 2000; Rodell, 2013). Also, when employees have the possibility to decide themselves on the cause of the volunteering and engage in it voluntarily, they are more likely to experience increased work meaningfulness (Grant, 2012).

Another set of organizational policies and practices that research sees as contributing to meaningful work concerns human resource practices. In particular, in their book chapter, Pratt and Ashforth (2003) argue that such practices as recruitment, selection and socialization can create meaningfulness *at* work and *in* work. In their conceptual work, Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, and Saks (2015) propose that those human resource practices (employee selection, socialization, performance management, and learning and development) which are strategically focused on stimulating engagement will influence the psychological experience of meaningfulness. What is more, recent studies show that perceived opportunities for development are positively associated with meaningful work (Fletcher, 2016a) and that perceptions of training provided by an organization are positively related to its employees' personal role engagement, the construct that involves psychological meaningfulness (Fletcher, 2016b).

The reviewed literature suggests that organizations can enable experiences of meaningful work for their employees by implementing CSR- and volunteering-initiatives and HR practices that are focused on employees' development and engagement. Yet, without attempting to integrate these initiatives and practices in the strategy and day-to-day practices of the organization, organizations risk to be perceived as unauthentic, minimizing the potential of these initiatives to boost work meaningfulness. Indeed, research points to the fact that different policies and practices could lead to the erosion of meaningfulness when employees perceive them as inauthentic (e.g., Bailey et al., 2017).

4.3.4. Social context at work

Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) propose that daily interactions with others (i.e., coworkers, managers, etc.) in their organizational context have the central position in the process of employees building meaning into their work. The authors explain that employees rely on social cues from others within the workplace to construct their own meaning of work. Indeed, research supports the idea that close interpersonal relationships with coworkers have a positive impact on perceptions of work meaningfulness (Grant, 2007; Kahn, 2007). A recent study by Colbert, Bono, and Purvanova (2016) showed that positive relationships at work are positively associated with meaningful work mainly because of them serving a “giving to others” function – providing individuals with the opportunity to assist, mentor, support, or care for the other person.

Good co-worker relationships foster a sense of belonging and a stronger sense of social identity (May et al., 2004; Rosso et al., 2010). Indeed, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) found that good working relationships with coworkers are important for creating a bond and a sense of common purpose that contributes to meaningful work. Furthermore, perceived sense of belonging, respect across groups as well as the experiences of being mentored by another employee were found to contribute to employees' meaningful work (Blattner & Franklin, 2017; Cardador & Hill, 2018). In their study, Schnell et al. (2013) showed that a social-moral climate in organizations characterized by trust-based and respectful relationships, atmosphere of support and cooperation, and self-

transcendent orientation enables greater meaningful work.

To conclude, our review suggests that employees' sense of work meaningfulness can be cultivated in the contexts characterized by interpersonal closeness, belonging and togetherness. In practice, this means that organizations should consider designing offices, work projects and schedules in such a way that there is a possibility for the positive workplace relationships to emerge and sustain. Organizations should also consider aligning performance and reward structures that nurtures cooperation rather than competition.

Overall, this section suggests that the possibilities for individuals to find their work meaningful depend on the work environment where individuals' needs are satisfied and facilitated by leaders, cultures, policies and practices, and the overall social context at work.

4.4. Societal-level factors

Societal factors influence people's access to jobs that facilitate meaning but also individuals' personal pathways to meaningfulness; such top down factors also influence economic and social structures of jobs and organizations. In many ways, person, job, and organizational factors that facilitate meaningful work are relevant only insomuch as meaningful work is supported by society at large. In the following sections, we discuss two of the factors that are especially pertinent for the ability of individuals in a specific society to attain meaning in their jobs: *access to decent work* and *cultural norms*.

4.4.1. Access to decent work

We contend that experiencing work as decent is a key facilitator of meaningful work. As conceptualized in the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016), decent work consists of, "(a) physical and interpersonally safe working conditions (e.g., absent of physical, mental, or emotional abuse), (b) hours that allow for free time and adequate rest, (c) organizational values that complement family and social values, (d) adequate compensation, and (e) access to adequate health care" (p. 130). Although decent work is experienced by individuals in their specific work environments, societies at large set the standard of employment that is to be expected by organizations and employers. The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2016; ILO, 2008) has been strident in proposing that decent work is a fundamental human right and that countries all over the world should be establishing policies to ensure these rights can be realized.

Ultimately, decent work provides a way for individuals to meet needs for survival, social connection, and self-determination (Duffy et al., 2016), and once these needs are met, individuals can experience higher-level work experiences such as meaningfulness. Initial research has shown that decent work is strongly related to job satisfaction and meaningful work, particularly when work provides people with adequate compensation and when the organization's values are complementary to societal and family values (Duffy et al., 2017). Although precise estimates on the availability of decent work at a societal level are not available at the current time, the most recent ILO (2016) report showcases that still a high percentage of the world's population live in developing countries where employment that meets the standard for decent work is more difficult to attain.

Although we view decent work as a key predecessor of meaningful work, some individuals may have the capacity to experience their work as meaningful even if it is not decent. For example, correlations between decent work and meaningful work are strong but range from 0.48–0.58 (Allan, Tebbe, Bouchard, & Duffy, 2018; Duffy et al., 2017; Işık, Kozan, & Işık, 2018), indicating these are not completely overlapping constructs – it is possible to have one without the other. To date, however, it is unclear what types of individuals would be more likely to experience meaningful work in environments where one or more components of decent work is absent. This offers an intriguing pathway for future research, perhaps building on the work of various scholars (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016) who have studied the experience of finding meaning in blue collar, low wage, or "dirty" work.

In practice, promoting decent work at an organization and job level means building work environments for all individuals that meet a threshold of providing for basic human needs of survival, social connection, and self-determination. With this threshold in place, employees would have the space to seek something larger from their work than simply need satisfaction. Having strong societal incentives to build these types of environments is critical as often these go against the bottom line (e.g., ensuring safe working conditions, etc.).

4.4.2. Cultural norms

When a specific society has policies in place to promote decent work, a foundation is laid on which meaningfulness can build, but this does not guarantee that meaningful work will be experienced by every person in that society. Although meaningfulness is a universal need in all societies independently of cultural norms (Frankl, 1969), variations exist in the relative importance of meaningfulness in comparison to other aspects of work. For example, a study by Magun and Rudnev (2012) showed that an orientation to competing values of personal success, power and wealth is more prominent among Russians than other Europeans. This suggests that meaningful work in a Russian cultural context is likely to be less important than materialistic values. Moreover, the robust work by Schwartz and colleagues on values around the world (Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999; Schwartz, 1999; Schwartz et al., 2012) shows that exact comparisons with regard to the importance of specific values (i.e., hierarchy, mastery, and autonomy) are complex and major differences exist in what people value country to country, including what should be reflected in their work for it to be meaningful.

Research suggests that expectations of meaning also differ across cultures (e.g., Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1994; England & Whitely, 1990; Harpaz & Fu, 2002). For example, in a country such as the United States which is based in more individualistic and capitalistic values, the societal expectation of deriving personal meaning from one's work might be very high. In other countries which place more of a value on collectivism, the societal expectation of deriving personal meaning from supporting one's family and

community might be very high and work would be seen as a means to this end, not the end itself. Ultimately, on an individual level these cultural norms undoubtedly have strong impacts on how people approach their jobs on a daily basis. Some societies may place a strong emphasis on individual fulfillment and well-being, and in turn emphasize work as a pathway to achieve these ends. This makes it important to evaluate whether someone is socialized to look at a job as a place to seek and build personal meaning, or whether jobs are mainly reflective of other, more utilitarian goals. It is only through understanding these cultural distinctions that we can properly hypothesize how people within a particular society approach their work.

5. Discussion and theoretical integration

Our review points to the fact that despite the important scholarly advancements in the understanding of antecedents of meaningful work, with few exceptions (e.g., Allan, Duffy, & Collisson, 2017; Ariely, Kamenica, & Prelec, 2008), the research on meaningful work has largely been cross-sectional. This makes it difficult to ascertain what causes meaningful work. The lack of experimental studies may be due, in part, to the lack of a comprehensive theory of meaningful work that can drive studies that are more rigorous. For example, some previous theories (e.g., Rosso et al., 2010) have not incorporated strong testable hypotheses that are conducive to experimental and longitudinal studies. The few experimental and longitudinal studies on meaningful work have also been published more recently and, therefore, not incorporated into existing theory. Some longitudinal studies on meaningful work (e.g., Allan, 2017), for example, have relied on older frameworks (e.g., The Job Characteristics Model; Hackman & Oldham, 1976) that do not include the abundance of research on meaningful work since their publication. A comprehensive theory of meaningful work that integrates perspectives across individual, organization, and societal levels and provides specific propositions about how these levels interact to create meaningfulness can drive studies that are more rigorous and organize research into a united framework.

The review also reveals that while the literature has made important progress in developing conceptual ideas about how different-level factors contribute to meaningful work, the empirical research testing these ideas is surprisingly sparse. For example, limited empirical work exists that examines how individual-level factors such as personality traits, vocational interests, work values, and abilities as well as societal factors link to meaningful work. No studies of which we are aware of have examined vocational interests and meaningful work directly. The scarcity of empirical research on individual-level factors appears to be problematic given that meaningful work represents an individual experience (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Similarly, empirical research on the link between organizational-level factors and meaningful work needs further development. Although scholars have made valuable efforts to understand how leadership fosters meaningful work, drawing solid conclusions about how, when, and which organizational culture as well as organizational policies and practices contribute to employees' meaningful work is challenging.

On a separate note, much of the available conceptual and empirical research, with few exceptions (e.g., Bailey et al., 2016; Bailey et al., 2017; Bailey & Madden, 2016), tends to explore how different-level factors benefit meaningful work. Still, it is also important to understand, for example, which factors impede or challenge the process of individuals experiencing their work as meaningful. These shortcomings highlight the need for more empirical research that explores the positive and negative factors shaping the experiences of meaningful work.

5.1. An integrative multilevel framework of factors fostering meaningful work

Based on the review findings, we inductively developed an integrative multilevel framework of factors fostering meaningful work, presented in Fig. 1. This framework depicts the proposed relations between individual-, job-, organizational-, and societal-level factors as influences on meaningful work. In the following sub-sections, we elaborate on a) how individual-level factors interact with job- and organizational-level factors, b) how organizational-level factors relate to job-level factors, and c) how societal-level factors shape individual-, job-, and organizational-level factors. We also acknowledge that societal-level factors may interact with individual-level factors as they relate to meaningful work. For example, some sociocultural contexts (e.g., collectivist cultures) may better reinforce greater good motivations and strivings toward meaningfulness than do others. Yet, since our focus on how organizations should foster meaningful work, we do not elaborate on this interaction.

5.1.1. Individual-level factors interacting with job- and organizational-level factors

In line with Fig. 1, the individual (i.e., one's dispositional signatures, characteristic adaptations, and personal narratives) represents the ultimate stating point in the process of meaningful work emergence. People are able to create meaningfulness when they have well-designed jobs with sufficient quality, type, and opportunities for job crafting that are embedded within organizations with facilitative leaders and cultures and a broader society that enables access to decent work. When given sufficient autonomy to be themselves and meet their basic and psychological needs, people will create their own meaningfulness without the need for organizations to create it for them. However, as detailed above, creating such environments is challenging with multiple relevant factors and avenues for intervention.

Regarding mechanisms that influence integrative meaning-making, a person's level of fit with the environment interacts with factors operating at each level in our model, including societal availability of diverse job opportunities; organizational recruitment, selection, and placement practices; the ability of particular jobs to satisfy particular dispositional signatures; and individual volition and motivation to enter into optimal-fitting jobs, as opposed to the more accessible and still “good-enough” opportunities (Gottfredson, 2005). These phenomena correspond with theories of person-environment (PE) fit (Holland, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), which suggest that the greater the congruence between a person's characteristics (i.e., personality, values, and goals) and the features of his or her job and work environment, the higher is the likelihood that individuals will thrive at their

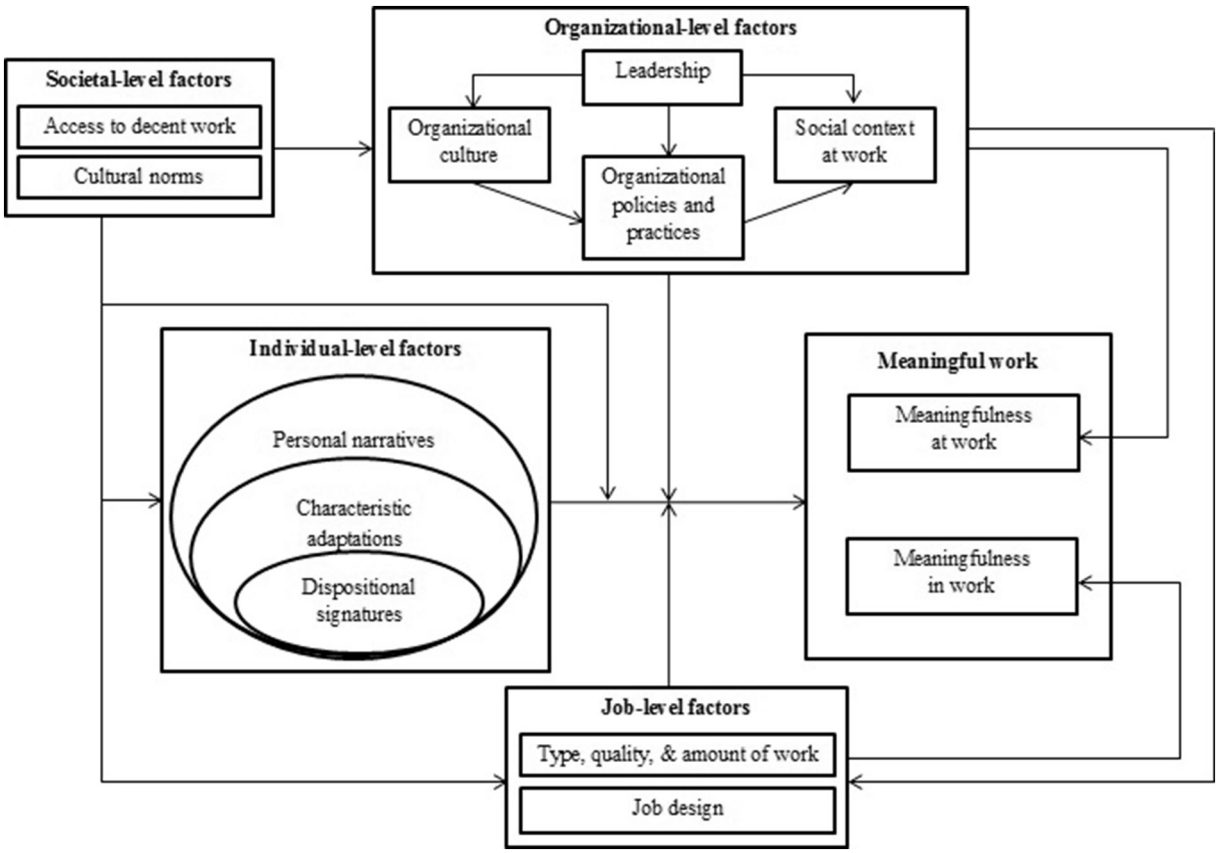

Fig. 1. An integrative multilevel framework of factors fostering meaningful work.

work. In line with Hansen (2013), at each level of the P-E fit paradigm (i.e., vocation, job, organization, team, supervisor; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), the better fit between a person and his or her environment, the smoother the path toward meaningfulness. Research supports the idea that with a greater person-job and person-organization fit, individuals experience a greater meaningful work (e.g., Barrick et al., 2013; Scroggins, 2008; Tims et al., 2016).

Yet trait-based fit is not itself a sufficient (nor even a necessary) condition for meaningful work. Regardless of how well an individual's work context objectively aligns with one's traits, it is possible for motivated individuals to set and pursue goals that facilitate their ability to make sense of their experience and find significance in it. Although this is likely often experienced as an individual-level endeavor, some jobs (e.g., those that involve artistic expression or direct contact with beneficiaries, those that allow substantial autonomy) enable pursuit of these goals to a greater extent than others. For example, when individuals seeking greater challenge at work find themselves underemployed in their current job (i.e., doing tasks or job that do not their qualifications), they might experience lower work meaningfulness (individual-level factors × type, quality, and amount of work; Allan, Tay, & Sterling, 2017). This situation resembles the lack of fit between the individual needs and motives and his or her job (i.e., needs-supply fit) as well as the lack of fit between the individual skills and the knowledge and skill required by the job (i.e., demand-supply fit; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Alternatively, for individuals high on prosocial motivation working in jobs that do not allow them to make an impact on the lives of beneficiaries (e.g., coworkers, supervisors, clients, or customers) may also challenge their experiences of work meaningfulness (individual-level factors × job design; Grant, 2007). In such situations, the individuals feel devalued, which opposes their efforts to build the individual-level factors autonomy, motivation, or volition, as well as their expression of personal strengths or embrace of purposeful goal strivings through work (cf. Allan et al., 2016; Barrick et al., 2013; Fouché et al., 2017; Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010).

Similarly, some organizations may be more invested than others in supporting pursuit of meaning-supportive goals (e.g., by systematically directing attention toward a clearly articulated mission that is clearly tied to the greater good). In line with the logic of person-organization fit (Hansen, 2013; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), greater work meaningfulness is likely to be achieved when individuals' values are congruent with those of an organization. As we discussed earlier, whether values, goals, and the mission of the organization would be clear to employees are dependent on their leader because managers are people who can destroy or challenge the attempts of individuals to find work meaningfulness (individual-level factors × leadership; Bailey & Madden, 2016). For example, research that studied the interaction between individual-level factors and leadership reveals that ethical leadership is more effective in eliciting work meaningfulness of employees that are higher in core self-evaluation (Wang & Xu, 2017). When employees have the

clarity of the organization's goals and strategies, individuals are better able to see how their work can contribute to these goals and strategies, adding to their experiences of work meaningfulness (individual-level factors × organizational culture; Cardador & Rupp, 2011). In addition, the presence of particular organizational policies and practices could be particularly important for individuals to act on their motives, goals, and strivings. For example, individuals who are concerned with the conservation and protection of the natural environment or have high moral identity are likely to experience a greater meaningful work in organizations that implement CSR policies and practices (individual-level factors × organizational policies and practices; Aguinis & Glavas, 2017). As another example, individuals who want to satisfy a need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000) may experience greater meaningful work in contexts with high-quality connections (individual-level factors × social context at work; Kahn, 2007).

Meaning-making is arguably most poignant at the level of personal narratives, which represent a lens through which influences from one's own self, the job, and the organization most powerfully converge and interact. According to McAdams and Pals (2006), dispositional traits function to sketch a behavioral outline that may (or may not) fit with particular environments. Characteristic adaptations “fill in the details of human individuality” (p. 212), which may be differentially reinforced by the most valued goals, beliefs, and social strategies within diverse jobs and organizations. And the integrative life narrative represents individual's opportunity to assign meaning to life and work, within the particular time and place at which it unfolds. A particular menu of stories is available to assist in this process, influenced by the prevailing norms of a particular job and organization. In making meaning, individuals sift through the competing stories to which they are exposed, resisting some and appropriating others that help them understand themselves and their place in the world, including in the world of work.

To summarize, meaningful work is an individual experience that tends to occur when an individual's motivations, values, and goals are in congruence with those of their environment (job, organization, and society). Future research should investigate meaningful work in the context of different jobs, organizations, and societies rather than in isolation, and should also study how different-level factors relate and interact to foster meaningful work.

5.1.2. Relations between organizational- and job-level factors

Fig. 1 suggests that different organizational-level factors do not operate in isolation to contribute to greater employees' experiences of meaningfulness at work. First, leaders are important persons within organizations who can influence other organizational-level factors and create conditions for individuals experiencing meaningful work. Leaders can build an organizational culture and help members to learn the behavior expectations linked to the culture as well as its underlying values (Schein, 2010). Leaders also provide and shape meaning of organizational policies and practices so that they enact the organization's goals and strategies (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). Furthermore, leaders can cultivate high-quality relationships in the workplace that create an atmosphere of cooperation, collaboration and trust (Carmeli, Ben-Hador, Waldman, & Rupp, 2009). Furthermore, since organizational culture is one of the critical levers by which managers can influence and direct the course of their organization and thus the behavior its employees (Smircich, 1983), it will shape the adopted organizational policies and practices, which, in turn, would cultivate and sustain a certain social context at work (e.g., Gelade & Ivery, 2003).

Job-level factors can directly contribute to employees' experiences of meaningfulness in work. They may also contribute to employees' meaningfulness indirectly, by translating organizational and societal values about certain types of work and how employees should approach it. For example, by taking the time to strive toward inspiring their employees to craft or design their jobs rather than simply managing their incentives, transformational leaders (Bass, 1990; Purvanova et al., 2006) send a similar message: “It is worth our time speaking toward your aspirations to enable you to feel motivated to work with us.” Indeed, recent study by Wang, Demerouti, and Le Blanc (2017) shows that transformational leadership facilitates followers' job crafting. In addition, the values underlying organizational culture might shape job design in the organization; for example, innovative organizational culture may provide more opportunities for individuals to have jobs that are high on autonomy. Similarly, CSR-related organizational practices and policies may find reflection in the creation of new jobs or the addition of tasks that stimulate the integration of sustainability in organizations (e.g., a new position of a CSR manager).

5.1.3. Societal-level factors shaping individual-, job-, and organizational-level factors

In line with Fig. 1, we propose that the context of a particular society will impact the degree to which an individual can find meaningful work as well as the degree to which specific jobs and organizations can foster a space where meaningful work is accessible. Indeed, research suggests that the meanings individuals attached to work as well as how individuals define what they consider meaningful work reflect the cultural norms, expectations, and priorities of the particular society they live in (Lair, Shenoy, McClellan, & McGuire, 2008). Qualitative research shows that discourses about a nation's cultural norms help individuals to socially construct their professional worlds and assign meaning to work (e.g., Barrett & Dailey, 2017).

Societies as a whole may have low levels of “decent” jobs available for citizens, cutting down the supply of potential jobs where one can reliably find meaningfulness. Indirectly, societies may not properly incentivize (or penalize, depending on one's perspective) jobs and organizations to provide workplaces where meaningfulness is a priority. These societal structures have key downstream impacts on individuals' workplace experiences. As such, we propose that in societies where stronger policies exist around the right to decent work for all individuals and where the experience of meaningful work is valued, more organizations broadly, and jobs specifically, within this society will offer environments where meaning can be enacted on an individual level. In these societies also the person, job, and organizational strategies to promote meaningful work will be most effective.

5.2. Suggestions for testing the integrative multilevel framework

Given that the proposed integrative model is new, testing its assumptions is an important direction for future research. Testing the model in its entirety is extremely challenging given its complexity. Therefore, scholars may want to choose variables that align with their expertise and interests to test various components of the model, with attention to multi-level variables. First, central to the propositions in the model are interactive effects at multiple levels that attend to P-E fit. For example, as discussed above, people who are prosocially motivated may experience more meaningful work in jobs that have more contact with beneficiaries and are task significant (Grant, 2007). We detail many of these interactive effects above, but there are many more implied by the model. Second, a particularly useful technique for testing the model is multi-level modelling, a technique largely absent from the meaningful work literature. Multi-level modelling allows researchers to embed workers within organizations or societies to separate different sources of variance predicting meaningful work. This technique, although with traditional structural equations modelling and moderation analyses, will be a useful tool for researchers willing to test the model.

6. Conclusion

As the meaningful work literature grows and evolves, exploring linkages between individual-, job-, organizational-, and societal-level factors that foster meaningful work will become critical, if the goal is to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Yet these levels are clearly related to each other, adding complexity to our understanding of how meaningful work can be facilitated in an organizational context. By understanding how these diverse factors are related across levels, organizations can design increasingly effective work environments in which individuals are granted sufficient autonomy to satisfy their will to meaning by enabling individuals to construct their own work meaningfulness. Our review offers one step forward toward a more comprehensive understanding.

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